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Most of my scientific research deals with Mars, in particular focusing on the nature of the surface, the climate, and how it has varied over the last four billion years, and the potential for life. I also am developing ideas related to understanding the distribution of life within the solar system and beyond, and the philosophical and societal connections to astrobiology.

Areas of expertise:

- Geosciences
- Space Physics
- Planetary Science
- Astrobiology

How I first became interested in this profession:

I grew up in the days of the early manned spaceflight program, and remember watching the Mercury and Gemini countdowns on TV. I think that this left me very open to the topic of space research. In the end, I just thought that planetary science was exciting, and when I discovered that there was an opportunity to become involved in it, I did!

What helped prepare me for this job:

I've always been interested in science and astronomy, but it wasn't until I was in my junior year that I got turned on to planetary science in particular. This came from taking a class in planetary science that really got me hooked on the subject.

My role models or inspirations:

My education and training:

- B.S. in Geophysics and Space Physics, University of California, Los Angeles, UCLA
- M.S. and Ph.D. in Planetary Sciences, California Institute of Technology

My career path:

- Post doctoral fellow, University of Colorado
- Six years as Research Associate at the University of Colorado
- Twelve years as Professor at the University of Colorado

What I like about my job:

It's very satisfying to be a part of something that I think has real and lasting value to society. It's just a lot of fun! I also really like the teaching itself (although I hate to grade papers), working with students, doing research, and interacting with people who are interested in what I do.

What I don't like about my job:

I don't like the paperwork at all. However, I do recognize that it is part of doing all of the other things and has to be done.

My advice to anyone interested in this occupation:

Do what you enjoy and pursue it! The fields of planetary science and astrobiology are both sufficiently broad that there is room for workers in all of the component disciplines as well as at all educational levels. You don't need to be a genius or to work 90 hours a week to be successful, even though some people choose to do so.